

CHRISTOPHER S. BOND

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2503

March 17, 2010

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On February 26, 2010, the Department of Defense (DoD) wrote to the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee its intentions to explore a multi-year procurement agreement for the purchase of F/A-18 series aircraft for fiscal years (FYs) 2010 through 2013. I applaud Department of the Navy for consider a multi-year procurement, a prudent move that would prevent the Navy from having empty carrier decks, save hundreds of millions in valuable taxpayer dollars, and maintain the strength of the United States defense industrial base.

As you know, the F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets are the backbone of the carrier-based strike fighter aviation fleet. These aircraft are providing support for our warfighters through close air support missions to ground forces with an unmatched deterrent capability. The F/A-18 aircraft continues to be the Navy's only strike fighter with advanced air-to-ground and air-to-air operational capability. The continued procurement of these aircraft is necessary to continue the Navy's warfighting operations.

The majority of the F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft have been purchased under two, multi-year procurements this past decade. With significant savings achieved from long-lead production and higher procurement rates, these agreements saved hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars compared to more costly single-year procurements. The Navy's own estimate stated that the multi-year procurements from FY2000 through FY2009 resulted in over \$1.8 billion in savings. A third multi-year procurement agreement could save hundreds of millions more in taxpayer dollars, all of which could be applied to other pressing defense requirements.

A third multi-year procurement for the F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft also would ensure that the defense industrial base for tactical aviation is maintained through at least FY2013. In order for the United States military to maintain its current air dominance, the skills and experience of the aviation manufacturing sector must be protected for as long as possible into the future rather than curtailed.

I strongly urge that you and the Department of the Navy take aggressive steps to enter into a multi-year procurement for the F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft. I stand ready to assist you in that effort.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Bond